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JOINT STATEMENT
HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS IN EAST TIMOR

(Kontras, Yayasan HAK, Caritas East Timor, Gertak, Fokupers, DSMPTT, GFFTL, Posko for Emergency Aid for Internal Refugees)

Background

Democratisation in Indonesia has forced president Suharto to end his 32 years of rule. International pressure, specifically by donor countries, have forced the Indonesian government to take steps which reflect its commitment to democracy. This concession to international pressure included an opening of democratic space in East Timor.

In the first months of reformation in Indonesia, this political opening allowed for peaceful demonstrations which involved thousands of East Timorese expressing our aspiration for independence and freedom. On the other hand, a number of counter demonstrations were staged by the Indonesian government and military to show the support of some East Timorese to continue integration with Indonesia.

In order to show the world how committed Indonesia is to human rights, the Indonesian government announced the possibility for independence, if an autonomy plan is rejected by the peopleof East Timor.

However, there still exists strong factions who wish to maintain the status quo in East Timor. Popular support for independence in East Timor clearly threatened their interest.

In this effort to preserve the status quo, a concerted campaign to exacerbate the security situation in East Timor was launched. In November 1998, the unofficial ceasefire between ABRI and Falintil which has been observed since May 1998 was disrupted by the killings in sub-district of Alas by the Indonesian military. Following this, new militia groups were formed since December 1998.

Since the forming of these militia groups, the status of human rights situation in East Timor has deteriorated. Militia groups have conducted forced recruitment of civilians and campaigns of torture and intimidation throughout East Timor. The killings of unarmed civilians, including women and children, have forced many to flee their homes. Data gathered by Posko for Emergency Aid for Internal Refugees show that since November 1998 to March 31 1999, there have been a total of 18,091 internally displaced peoples (IDP's). These IDP's have become a target for killings by militia groups, as clearly demonstrated in the attacks of the Liquiça Church on April 6 1999 and of the home of Manuel Carrascalão on April 17 1999.

Violence in East Timor

Contrary to statements of the Indonesian government which assure a peaceful solution to the East Timor problem, incidents of violence is on the rise. Particularly concerning is the targeting of civilians. Data gathered by Yayasan HAK on attacks towards civilans in Alas (November 1998), documents 15 dead and 95 detained out of which only 15 have received due process of law, and the other 80 disappeared. Also during this same incident, 30 people lost their homes to arson.

In the first 3 months of 1999, Yayasan HAK has documented at least 40 dead, 22 wounded, 8 illegal detention, 2 women raped by militia. Among those victims dead and wounded, included also are women and children.

Despite statements of concern from various parties, officials in East Timor have remained passive in controling the action of militia groups. In many occassions, Indonesian officials claim that Indonesia is the sovereign power in East Timor. This is ironic given the fact that none of the acts of violence conducted by the militia receive legal sanctions. Infact, Indonesian officials are clearly involved in these incidents.

According to eyewitness statements, Indonesian security forces were actively involved in the attack towards internally displaced people seeking refuge in the Liquiça church (5 April 1999).
The Indonesian mobile police brigade (BRIMOB) threw tear gas at the refugees before the attack by the militia. During a rally before the attack of the home of Manuel Carrascalão (17 April 1999), Eurico Guterres, leader of one militia group, openly named and threatened the lives of a number of people. However, Indonesian officials at the rally took no action to prevent attacks by the militia towards these known targets. In the sub-district of Cailaco, regency of Bobonaro, as an act of revenge to the killing of 3 militia members and 2 Indonesian soldiers allegedly conducted by Falintil, the District Commander of Bobanaro (Kodim), Letkol Kav. Burhanudin Siagian, commanded the execution of 5 civilians in public on April 12 1999. He also ordered the capture and killing of community leaders thought to be pro-independence which led to a hunting down of civilians and attacks on homes.

Indonesian officials' involvement in the forming of militia groups and its actions is clearly seen in their participation in their ceremonies and rallies. Also, Forum Persatuan Demokrasi dan Keadilan (FPDK or Forum for Unity, Democracy and Justice) which controls the activities of the militia is headed by a regent (Bupati). Forum members are made up of local Indonesian officials.

These acts of violence is engineered to prove a thesis held by the Indonesian government-that a referendm will bring East Timor to civil war. Ironically, despite the publicly known fact of military involvement in these incidents of violence, the Indonesian Minister of Defence, Menhankam/Pangab, Jenderal Wiranto, brokered a "peace agreement" between pro-independende and pro-integration groups in Dili on April 21 1999. Facts have shown that even after the so-called "peace agreement" acts of violence and killing still continue. In the regency of Suai, hundreds of young men have been captured, according to reports from the parish priest, Pe. Hilario Madeira. At least 8 bodies have been found in the Tavara river, and there are indications that many more have been killed. The same situation is found in other regencies. Militia groups and the military continue to intimidate, detain and kill civilians even after the peace agreement.

Impact

Killings, terror and intimidation by the militia in East Timor has had a great effect on the people of East Timor. Hundreds have been killed and wounded. Many have been treated in the Motael clinic in Dili. Many people have lost their homes as they were attacked and/ or burned by militias. In Viqueque, at least 500 people have left their homes to unknown location to seek refuge. The same situation can be found in Bobonaro, Ermera and Suai.

Phsycollogicaly, there is an atmosphere of fear leading to a paralysis in

economic activities. In the countryside, farmers have stopped their agricultural activities due to militia threats. In Dili, there are at least 1200 internally displaced. A number of these refugees were killed during the militia attack at Manual Carrascalão' house on 17 April 1999.

Terror and intimidation is also directed towards civil servants. They have been forced to sign documents indicating their allegiance to the Indonesian Republic. Threatened with dismissal, in some areas civil servants are being forced to become members of FPDK.

Threats and terror are also directed towards humanitarian workers in East Timor. These humanitarian organisations are not granted access to provide necessary medicine and food for internally displaced people. These organisations have been targeted for attack, and their workers have received threats on their lives.

Demands

Based on this situation, we, humanitarian NGOs in East Timor, demand:

1. A presence of UN peacekeeping forces in East Timor.
2. Disarmament of militia.
3. UN pressure to pull Indonesian military out of East Timor, followed by disarmament of Falintil.
4. Guarantee for security for humanitarian workers in East Timor to conduct its activities.
5. Access to international human rights organisations and humanitarian agencies to East Timor.

Dili, 28 April 1999

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Rui Lorenco

2. Yayasan HAK (Hukum, hak Asasi & Keadilan)

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4. Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae (Fokupers)

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5. Dewan Solidaritas Mahasiswa Timor Timur (DSMTT)

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6. Grupo Feto Foin Sae Timor Lorosae (GFFT)

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